

# Curry Arts Journal 1997



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She looks at me and I shudder,  
It's happened again and now I'm going under.  
The trance, the dance  
That has no rhythm, that keeps me under  
But who is blind.  
All time, nothing else.  
Just me, my mind, my eyes, myself.  
I know what I've seen and what  
It means to have, to hold,  
It's too damn cold.  
Not here, not there,  
Be wild, run free  
Suppressed by a system that's disgusted  
By me.  
I look around and see death on all  
Sides, even if I could run,  
There's no where to hide.  
The ghosts of my past rip through  
My soul, I've been here too long,  
To now lose control.  
One switch and it's over, there's  
No one to cry.  
Is your race so superior that mine  
Must die?

— Fran Whitney III

## Christmas Presence

Rita always said, "I don't know where I got you from, Linnie girl."

I used to wonder, too. Rita was a tornado, a whirling dervish. I was the calm after her storm. I'd seen her lose her temper and it wasn't pretty. Some poor slob would say the wrong thing. Little dots of perspiration would break out on her forehead. Her red hair seemed to get a little curlier. She'd bare her claws. He'd never stand a chance.

She reined it in for me, though. I was ten when the Thomas' moved into old man Conroy's house. Carla took to me from the start, but her mom looked at me like I was some kind of foreign food she was afraid to taste. One afternoon Rita came to get me.

Mrs. Thomas came to the bedroom door. "Lynne, your mother is here."

"Hi, sweetie," Rita said.

I looked at her a little funny, 'cause of her dress. It was navy blue, to the knee - I'd never seen it before. She smelled different too - like the lilac bushes in our side yard.

"Supper's on, sweetheart. You too, Carla, - there's plenty."

Mrs. Thomas wrinkled up her nose. "Carla won't be able to make it tonight," she said.

Carla whined. "Please, Mommy. Pleeeeeeeeez?"

"She has homework."

"No, I don't. I..."

Mrs. Thomas shot Carla a look that stopped her mid-sentence.

Well, Rita never said a word to Carla's mom, but her face was red. She strutted back across the street, yanking me along beside her. She threw her cigarette down on the ground and stomped on it. "Don't let those self-righteous sons-of-bitches get to you, sweetie," she said. "They don't have enough class to wipe your feet."

I pulled my arm away. "You're making a big deal out of nothing, Mum," I said.

I avoided Carla after that. I had enough friends anyway. Rita said her customers from the Pub were our family. She was right. If it wasn't for them, especially Pat, I don't think I could have gotten through.

Just before Thanksgiving, I was walking up the street and there was Pat, sitting on the front steps.

"I've been waiting for you, darlin'," he said. "Rita's had a little faintin' spell."

When we got to the hospital, she was sitting up in bed. "I'm getting out of here. There's nothing wrong with me," she said.

She looked fine to me, but her doctor didn't seem convinced. "We need to run a few tests," he said.

Next thing I knew, Rita was in surgery. Lung cancer. They couldn't get it all. She came home for a few days, made it through Thanksgiving. She even gave up smoking, but the cough didn't quit. I guess



I never paid much attention before. She'd been coughing as long as I remember.

Pat and I were going through her stuff, trying to find something to put her in. I pulled out her favorite, the green sequined number with the plunging neckline, but Pat nixed it.

I remember when she bought that dress. She twirled in front of the mirror. "Isn't this hot, baby?"

"It's great, Rita."

Rita must be pissed about how they did her up. The makeup was all wrong. She never left the house without full face makeup. Lipstick was the final touch. When I was little, I'd sit on her bed, quiet so as not to break her concentration. She could take the cover off that tube, twist it up out of its case, purse her lips and smooth it on in two seconds flat. She'd press her lips together to get it just right, then take her little finger and remove any excess.

If she caught me watching in the mirror, she'd laugh, then jump up and chase me through the house trying to plant a big red one on me. I hated that.

Christmas is the day after tomorrow. Pat came by and strung up all the lights, just like he does every year. We've got the large, old-fashioned kind. Mostly red and blue, but a little green and some yellow are mixed in. Once, when I was a kid, I heard Mr. Thomas say our house looked like a monument to the Fourth of July. Good!

We usually have the gang over Christmas Eve.

Rita said they have nowhere else to go. It must be true 'cause the phone has been ringing off the hook. They want to come this year, too. I'm not sure I have the menu right, but I think it's close. Those little wieners in barbecue sauce were a bitch to find. Most everyone is bringing something anyway.

It's late. I'm sitting in the dark and I take a cigarette out of my purse. I light it up. It burns my throat. I can't stand the taste, but watching the end burn I could swear that Rita's here. She's sitting on the couch. She's got on her blue silk pajamas. Her eyes go soft. "Don't let those sons-of-bitches get to you, baby," she says.

"No, Mum. I won't."

— Rachel Bernard

### Get Back Into Bed

A dark angel of sin  
You take me in.

Did you win, lose, or draw?  
Is that a mirror or a window?  
Is that a hearse or a limousine?  
Have you had enough of real life yet?

Go to where you can't see who you are.  
How much can you take and how long can you  
go?  
Can you laugh at everything yet?

In the dark night  
I hear screaming, shooting, sirens, ambulances.  
Don't get hurt.  
Don't get destroyed.  
Get back into bed.  
Get away from it all.  
Nobody listens to the sounds.  
Who are we trying to kid?  
They are so loud,  
So clear  
Is that someone else?  
Or is it you?

— Susan Boerman

### Stay In My Head For Awhile

I never mentioned a word,  
All by myself.

Past reality has gone absurd,  
Present under poor health.

With the future smiling above,  
Knowing love at an impasse will connect.

The dreams and emotions resurrect,  
By memories random select.

In a mind scattered and dangled,  
Torn at every angle.  
Falling at the ground,  
With sounds of sadness and longing,  
Left unguarded because she is not around.

Swept under the rug to be trampled and forgotten.

If I had known about the chair I sat in,  
I never would have left your side.  
Sitting down I know not where to begin.  
Until you're here,  
Time I will have to bide.

But for this moment,  
Stay in my head for awhile.

— Will Gowdy

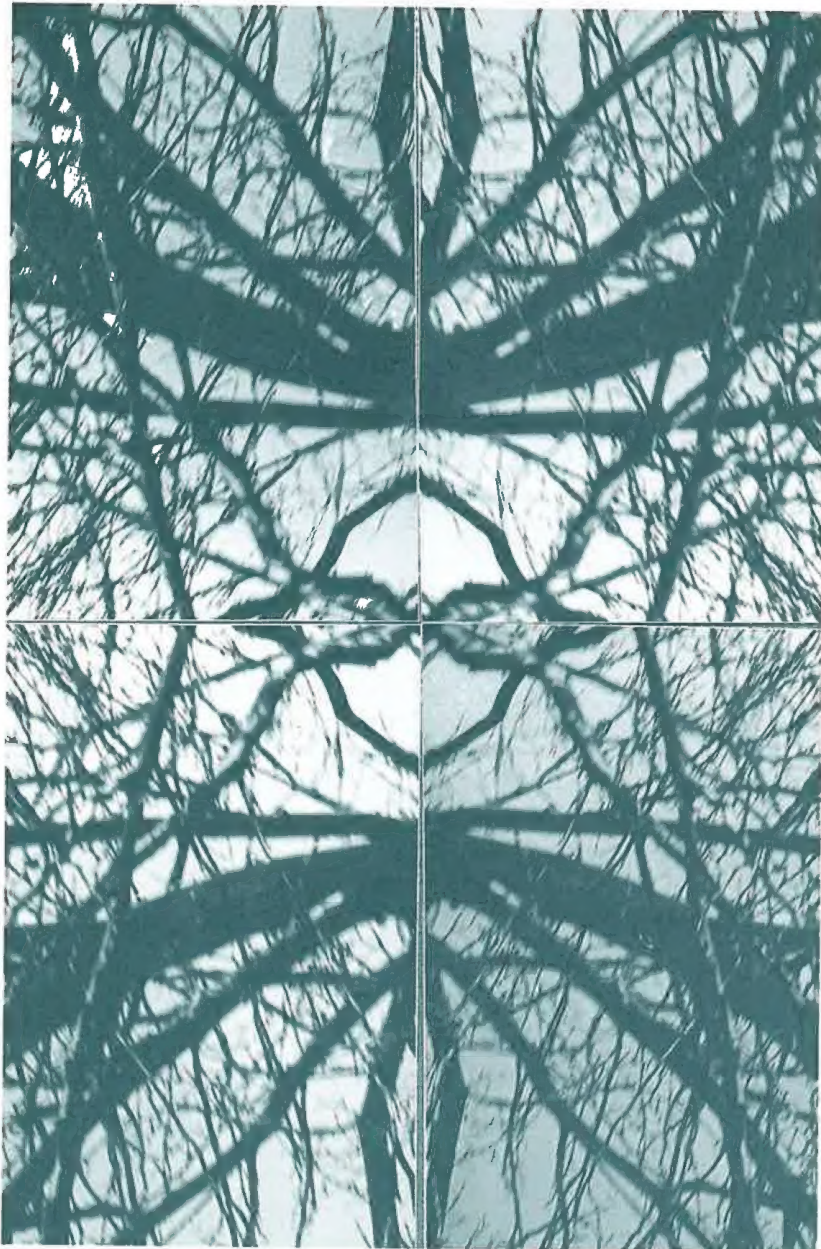


## A Crazy Kind of Love

Her eyes widened as a hand gripped her shoulder and pulled her backwards forcefully. Her purse fell to the ground with a clatter; she could hear the sound of her compact mirror breaking. A cloth covered her mouth and a sweet smell pervaded her nostrils as her mind filled with a cloud of grayish haze. She lost consciousness before her knees gave out, and her attacker caught her easily in his arms.

It was the sound of a car door slamming that brought her slowly back into consciousness. She tried to force her eyelids open, wondering why they felt so heavy, and realized after a moment that there was something over her face preventing her from seeing. She felt instantly claustrophobic and fought the nausea that welled up in her throat. She breathed in deeply, bowing her head slightly and wondered if she should speak. She remembered walking out of work earlier, it seemed just seconds ago, and trying to get her key into the lock on her car door. The memories of a strong arm around her came back suddenly, and she struggled to move. She was tied up, her arms were bound behind her and her feet were tied together too. She was sitting down, on a hard wood floor it felt like. She didn't have a gag on.

She cleared her throat, and heard the door open. Her heart pounded frantically, she looked towards the sound, hoping that her blindfold would magically disappear and she would be able to see her abductor.



Esther Rock



"You're awake," she heard.

"Who are you?" she asked, turning her head so that her ear was aimed toward the voice.

She felt a hand on her the top of her head, moving her forward so that the blindfold could be untied. The hands gently worked the knot at the back of her head and she blinked rapidly as the blindfold slipped away and the light pierced her eyes. The sun was setting, she must have been out for hours.

She looked up at the tall man before her; he was staring down at her calmly.

"I know you," she said slowly, cautiously. He was very tall and thin, with a stern looking jaw and pale eyes. She couldn't tell if they were blue or green in this light. Her eyes widened and her heart beat faster.

"James," she whispered. "What am I doing here?" she asked fearfully. She looked around at her surroundings, a beautifully stained hardwood floor and a stone fireplace in the corner. It was a rustic cabin of some sort with a great deer's head over the doorway.

He knelt down before her, touching her hair gently. She pulled away quickly. His hand jumped back and his eyes widened. "I... I brought you here," he whispered.

She stared at his hand, frozen in the air near her face and she wondered for a moment if he was going to hit her. Fear churned inside her and she felt

the tears start to form in her eyes. He shook his head quickly, picking her up easily, as though she weighed nothing.

"No, no!" he said quietly. "Don't cry. Don't cry Emma." He took her up the stairs. She fought to get out of his arms, but knew that if she fell it would do her no good since she was tied up. She relented at last, giving up her struggle, and simply screamed as loudly as she could.

He dropped her on a bed upstairs in one of the bedrooms. She screamed for what seemed like minutes before her throat gave up and she sobbed weakly on the bed. "No one can hear you Emma. No one," he said.

"You're psychotic," she sobbed. "What do want from me?"

His head twitched violently and she closed her eyes as he again raised his hand to her face. She winced, waiting for the blow, but it never came. Instead, a tender hand grazed her cheek patiently. "You know you wouldn't have come otherwise," he said. His fingers brushed a tear from her cheek, and he pushed her long blond hair from her face. She looked so beautiful like this. Her green eyes were rimmed with red.

"So you decided to kidnap me to convince me?"

He looked confused for a moment, then shook his head. "No, it's not like that. You'll be happy, you'll see. Just like always Emma. It will be just

as good as it always is," he said enthusiastically. A great smile broke across his face and she felt a pang of fear again. She fought the tears that were forming and tried to pull out of the ties that were holding her.

He saw what she was doing and leapt up to help her. "Oh, sorry," he said quickly. "I forgot to take those off of you."

She froze as he touched her, wrapping his arms around her torso to reach her bound wrists. The rope loosened after a minute and she pulled her arms quickly in front of her. She rubbed her hands together, noticing the red burn that had formed on each wrist. James leaned over, his head down as he untied the rope on her ankles. With a ferocious kick, she knocked his jaw with her free foot and sent him sprawling on the floor. He shook his head with bewilderment, not even realizing that she had gone running down the stairs. He heard the door fly open before he even stood up.

He rose, rubbing his sore jaw and trotted down the stairs. "Emma, come back here," he yelled tiredly.

He stood and trotted down the stairs and out the door. He wasn't worried. He knew these woods better than he did his own neighborhood in Seattle. He had been coming here since he was a little kid, his mom had always taken him. And now, chasing after her, he knew where she'd run. She'd go towards the only sound out here, the river. He caught a glimpse of her blue shirt, so obvious against the

snow covered ground.

He caught up to her at last, and she lunged at him with fury, screaming loudly as she did. He wrapped his arms around her protectively, not sure if he was preventing her from hurting him or herself. She beat her fists against his chest wildly, and he pulled her against him, reveling in the feeling of her in his arms. Finally she gave up, allowing him to again pick her weary body up and carry her back to the cabin.

Hopelessness filled her. She didn't know where she was. There didn't seem to be anyone around that would even hear her when she screamed. She had seen the truck, but it had been locked when she tried the door. And there didn't seem to be a path leading anywhere, not even giving any indication of which way the truck had come. The falling snow blanketed everything, silencing her fear for a moment, making her only aware of how cold she truly was.

Her breath came quickly, forming little clouds as soon as it exited her mouth. She found herself almost longing for the warmth of the cabin. When he carried her up the stairs and across the porch into the house, she felt the heat surround her and at once felt better. He set her down, letting her feet linger on the floor for a moment before he let her go. He closed the door and stared at her. "I trust you're not going to try leaving again?" he asked almost affectionately. A smile played in the corner of his



mouth and she nodded, again feeling the helplessness.

He led her towards the bathroom and when he suggested she take a bath, she accepted readily. He had left some clean clothes on the bed in an upstairs bedroom, and when she was done she dressed quickly.

She walked downstairs, not wanting to face him but needing to know why she was here. He turned to watch her descend, smiling a little as she tentatively walked closer. She stopped at the edge of the living room, her eyes wary.

"Come over here. It's warm by the fire," he said.

She shook her head, sitting at the very edge of the room, a little cold from her wet hair.

"I won't bite," he said quietly.

"You abducted me James. What am I supposed to think?" she asked cynically.

She watched him nod thoughtfully, then turn back to the fire. A piece of wood fell off the grate to the bottom of the stone fireplace, glowing red for a moment, then dying out. He stood up and her heart stopped briefly. He walked away from her, then sat down further away from the fire. He pointed to his earlier seat and nodded to her. "Go ahead, take it. I don't want you catching cold."

She didn't move for a second, wanting to defy him but at the same time a droplet of water fell from her hair on to her neck and she shivered. She stood

up and sat on the rug where he had been, relishing the feel of the heat on her face.

They were silent for a moment before she said, "Why did you bring me here?"

"It was the only way I could think of," he returned.

Later, when he signaled for her to follow him up the stairs, she did so without question. She didn't struggle with him as he tied her arms together, this time with a soft tie, then bound her to the bed. "I won't hurt you Emma, I just can't risk you going away."

She nodded, not understanding, not caring, just wanting to go to sleep and wake up in another place. She was able to roll on her side despite the restraints and she turned away from him. When he crawled into the bed next to her, she winced. But he never touched her. He simply pulled the covers up around her and rolled over on his side, his back facing hers. Minutes later, she fell asleep.

She found herself in a rugged truck James was driving along the ocean. She gazed happily out the window at the moon's reflection on the water. She wiggled next to him on the leather bench seat and his arm pulled her close. He kissed the top of her head as he drove. The image changed suddenly and there was a struggle. There were clothes on the floor, and a gun fell from his grasp. The report deafened her and her hands clapped over her ears as she spun to see if James had been shot. She saw a

woman, someone that was familiar to her, a vaguely distant acquaintance, falling to the floor with her hand clutching her stomach. She felt a panic set in as the blood covered the floor and she heard herself scream, though she didn't wake up. It was daylight suddenly, and she saw light streaming in through the barred windows of an old warehouse. She was bound to a large metal object, a broken water heater she thought, and her head fell forward out of exhaustion. She didn't know where he was, she hadn't seen him in hours. Her arms ached from the rope around them, and when James walked in, she cried out to him, begging him to untie her. He walked over to her and stood before her, obviously noticing the tear in her shirt, and the red burns across her wrists and ankles. He smiled at her, a cruel and wicked smile, and laughed loudly.

She gasped and awoke quickly, trying to shake the nightmare from her head. She felt an arm caress her shoulder and pull her closer. She closed her eyes again.

The sun lit up the bedroom long before her senses returned. She felt peaceful, comfortable. She rolled onto her back, running her hands through her hair. She subconsciously knew that something was different, but she stretched and momentarily didn't care.

She felt an arm encircle her waist and she smiled, pressing herself against the warm body next to her. Her hands grazed his arm, feeling the tight

muscle in his upper arm. A mouth nuzzled her neck, kissing her gently. She whimpered slightly, feeling the stubble tickle her soft skin.

Her eyes fluttered open then, a smile playing on her face. She froze when she realized where she was. She flew out of the bed, pulling the blanket with her. She gasped when she saw that her clothes were on the chair next to the bed. She backed against the wall and felt a wave of terror as he gazed appreciatively at her naked arms as she wrapped herself more tightly in the blanket.

"What's wrong?" he asked sleepily.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I was sleeping," he said, "Until you started wiggling about. Then I woke up."

She watched him carelessly stretch, his bleach blond hair falling across the pillow in unkempt little spikes. The dark roots shone against the white of the pillow, and he rubbed his eyes lazily. His eyes focused on her after a minute, the bright blue piercing her, and he smiled evenly. He stood up then, and she looked away. He wore nothing, and when he stretched his arms above his head she stared at the floor and blushed. She knew that she had just been willingly pressed up against his bare skin. She knew it and he knew it. When he pulled on a pair of jeans, she allowed her gaze to travel back up to his face and she dared herself to speak.

"How did I get untied?" she asked after she dressed and followed him down the stairs.













































